



## **SFY 2025 Proctor Public School, ISD 704**

Final Report

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Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development  
Employment and Training Programs Division

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# Introduction

Independent School District (ISD) No. 704, Proctor, was granted state funding to establish a career and technical education program, the Northern Connections Center, to serve ISD No. 704, Independent School District No. 700, Hermantown, and Independent School District No. 99, Esko.

Funds for this project are appropriated in [Minnesota Session Laws – 2024, Chapter 120, S.F. 5289, Article 1, Section 2, Subdivision 3\(t\)](#). The amount available to the Proctor Public School, ISD 704 in SFY 2025 is \$162,450.00 (Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development is permitted to retain up to 5% of the \$171,000.00 appropriation for administration and monitoring of the grant). This is a one-time appropriation.

# Expenditure Data

Expenditures from August 10, 2024 through September 30, 2025 for grant 5PPS6300:

SFY 2025 Budget Category	SFY 2025 Budget	SFY 2025 Expenditures through September 2025
Administration	0.00	0.00
Direct Services/Project Staff	\$122,450.00	\$121,072.28
Contracted Services	\$40,000.00	0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$162,450.00</b>	<b>\$121,072.28</b>

# Planning Accomplishments

During the first several months of the grant, staff from Proctor, Hermantown, and Esko School Districts met with the goal of *“developing a comprehensive plan that would encourage, promote, and engage students in the area of Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings using a collaborative model between the school, labor organizations, and businesses”*. Several meetings took place to develop the program, a new CTE center, and to make a plan of actionable items to meet the goal of realizing a new CTE center in the area.

It is anticipated that the Steering committee (Superintendents Juntunen, Whitwam, and Fischer, and Business Manager Anderson) will meet with the Project Director on a monthly basis to discuss progress in each strategy category.

This planning initiative aims to consolidate resources, streamline CTE program delivery, and expand CTE opportunities for students across all three districts. This initiative will plan and strategize a centralized enhanced CTE program that will serve as a career and technical education hub for students in the Proctor, Hermantown and Esko districts. The plan will lead to offering students a range of specialized newly designed and centrally located CTE programs that are set to be implemented as early as the 2026-2027 academic year. It represents a significant advancement in the collaboration among Proctor Public Schools, Hermantown Community Schools, and Esko Public Schools, reflecting a shared dedication to preparing students for successful careers in a rapidly evolving job market. By creating a unified and forward-thinking

career and technical education center, the three districts aim to enhance educational outcomes, foster workforce readiness, and strengthen the regional economy.

Early on, the Project Director and team leaders visited Wright Technical Center (WTC) in Buffalo to view their CTE program which offered specialized career and technical training in collaboration with post-secondary educational partners and local industry leaders. It also offers students with specific learning needs access to strong technical training. Subsequent meetings developed goals and objectives in the planning phase and the center's mission and vision. These included:

- The Career & Technical Education Project Goals
- A recap of the visit to Wright Technical Center
- Educational Secondary Partners
- The Northern Connections Center Facility Location
- Anticipated costs of the center
- State and Federal Funding

**Northern Connections Center's Mission:**

*Utilizing education and industry partnerships to engage students in developing purposeful skills in preparation for success in post-secondary education and meaningful careers.*

**Northern Connections Center's Vision:**

*Provide in demand career and technical programs and other educational opportunities in collaboration with educational and industry partnerships.*

Additional meetings were held to discuss the area's industry workforce needs, share data resources, keep partners informed and encourage financial support, and pursue local, regional, state, and federal grant opportunities. The Proctor Public Schools submitted a Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Multi-Purpose Community Facility Grant application in late 2024 to further this goal.

Discussions included the location of the new Northern Connections Center with a possible facility of interest, the Proctor Area Community Center (PACC), which located off of Interstate 35 in Proctor, providing convenient access for local school districts and students. Once the site financing is secured, the next focus will be in establishing industry partnerships. To ensure long-term financial viability and quality standards, industry partners will assist in the operating costs through sponsors. They will provide master trainers to work with licensed teachers to ensure training meets industry standards and lead to certification, licensure, and articulated college credits for continuation into post-secondary institutions. Also, Northern Lights Academy will partner with regional industry partners to offer state of the art training in a renovated facility providing mutual benefits to high school students through hands-on training while assisting industry partners by replenishing the future workforce in northern Minnesota.

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was completed on the project. Result showed that the primary strengths (improved CTE offerings and strong initial partnerships) and opportunities (new partnerships and skilled youth population) outstripped weaknesses (lack of funding) and threats (uncertain future funding).

It is anticipated that the City of Proctor administrative offices will continue to operate with the NCC. Proctor Public Schools will maintain a long-term lease for the facility through January 1, 2032, and will plan to raise funds to purchase the facility thereafter.

It is expected that NCC programming will serve an estimated 150-300 students annually, along with at least 3,000 adults from the northeastern Minnesota Arrowhead region. Establishment of the NCC will improve work, education and health monitoring for youth and the local community. To improve work, NCC is anticipated be a public career resource and internet connectivity hub, providing career exploration and skill development in high demand fields such as healthcare, technology, manufacturing, and construction and offer industry partners facility space and equipment as an onboarding center. Northern Connections plans to offer educational programming that focuses on more advanced skill development, certifications, workforce readiness, and research on job outlooks. Access to GED programming and literacy resources will also be available. In addition, a separate initiative is planned to include NCC facility space to accommodate 40-50 Level 4 learners with special needs for easy access to CTE programming. NCC will work with regional mental service providers to support public health and mental health needs for disengaged youth and their families by offering a dedicated meeting space for mental health services. Finally, NCC initiative intends to engage students from protected populations in education and community education programming to connect them to better future employment outcomes and offer culturally significant activities such as Ojibwe crafts and language.

Partners include City of Proctor, owner of the current Proctor Area Community Center Facility (PACC); WOLD Architects and Engineers and ICS Construction Company of Duluth have provided guidance, cost estimates and analysis of Proctor Area Community Center existing space; and Lake Superior College and Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College will offer dual credit for students enrolled in CTE programs.

More funding opportunities are being investigated since the projects MDE Multi-Purpose Community Facility grant application was not funded. A possible federal CTE grant was discussed. Staff also met with Northeast Minnesota Office of Job Training (JET) staff to discuss possible delivery of Commercial Driver's License at NCC through the Teamsters. Other potential regional training partners included: Moline Bakery for CNC, Culinary, and Welding, ACME Tools, Amsoil (automotive services), and Areostich & Duluth Pack (sewing).

Additional meetings to develop partnerships and funding streams included elected officials, University of Minnesota director staff, industry leaders, and more. It is anticipated that, with state and federal support, construction costs will be secured. Industry partnership will provide the needed revenue to ensure daily operational costs will be covered. With the success of the two strategies, students will be able to afford specific technical training in a state of the art facility ensuring a skilled workforce to meet the needs of employers in northeast Minnesota.

## **New Grant Funds**

As of October 31, 2025, state grant funds for the SFY 2025 are 75% expended. They are expected to be fully expended by the grant end date, June 30, 2026. No new direct appropriation state funds have been granted to Proctor Public Schools for the SFY26-27 biennium.